

DOMESTIC RABBIT

updated March 2017



Range	The last Ice Age confined the species to the Iberian peninsula and small areas of France and northwest Africa, but due to human action and adaptability of this species, European rabbits today exist in the wild on every continent except Antarctica. Domesticated rabbits are found worldwide.
Habitat	Burrows (warrens) in open fields and woods
Diet (wild)	Mainly grass, clover, and selected herbs. In winter, they can eat the bark of trees
Diet (captivity)	
Description	Length: 16 inches; weight: 4 pounds. Males (bucks) are larger than females (does). Have short tails and fur that's usually thick and soft. Hind legs are longer than the forelimbs. Soles of the feet have hairy cushions.
Lifespan	9 years
Reproduction	After a gestation period of 28–31 days, the female gives birth to 2–8 young. Newborns, called kittens, are naked, blind and helpless (altricial). Sexual maturity is reached at 4–5 months of age. Mating season is usually in the spring and summer, but can last longer. The mother visits the nest for only a few minutes each day to nurse, but her milk is extremely rich. Young are weaned at four weeks of age and attain sexual maturity at about eight months. Within hours of giving birth, the female can mate again and can produce up to seven litters per year.
Behavior	Rabbits are crepuscular. They have a digestive system that allows them to eat large amounts of food at one time. They excrete a soft feces made of partially digested food, which they will eat in order to get maximum nutrition out of their food (called "coprophagy"). Burrows are a complex network of passages and interconnecting tunnels of up to 10 feet deep. A typical colony consists of six to 10 adults of both sexes. Colonies have distinct dominance hierarchies which are particularly important for males, as dominance position determines which male will have preferential access to mates. Rabbits can cause extensive damage to crops and are considered a pest by most farmers. They are useful, however, for controlling the spread of unwanted plants such as gorse, bramble, and coarse grasses. Rabbits thump their hind legs to warn others of impending danger and display their tails when fleeing. When annoyed, rabbits will grind their teeth, making gnashing sounds.
Our animals	2 males. Born: 2007 and 2013
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European rabbits are the ancestor of all domestic rabbits (about 80 varieties). The first reliable evidence of rabbit breeding dates back to the Roman period. • Rabbits are well-known for their reproductive capacity; however, their mortality rates in the first year of life frequently exceed 90 percent. • Rabbits represent one of the most economically important mammal species. They are a popular game animal, especially in Europe, and varieties of this species are raised commercially for meat, skin and wool, and are popular as pets. Rabbits are also used extensively in medical research and for testing the safety of chemicals and consumer products. • Rabbits are altricial. In contrast, hares are generally born with hair and are able to see (precocial). • Unlike most mammals, rabbit females are usually larger than males. • Angora rabbit wool is five times warmer than sheep wool. • Rabbits are not rodents, but lagomorphs. Lagomorphs differ from rodents in that lagomorphs have four incisors in the upper jaw (not two, as in rodents) and have enamel on the front and back side of the incisors, whereas rodents only have enamel on the front side. Also, lagomorphs are almost strictly herbivorous unlike rodents, many of which will eat both meat and vegetable matter. • Hares and jackrabbits are in the genus <i>Lepus</i>; all remaining species are referred to as rabbits. While hares are well-adapted for running long distances, rabbits run in short bursts and have modified limbs adapted for digging. Hares are often larger than rabbits and have black tipped ears. Newborn hares are precocial; newborn rabbits are altricial.

Phylum
ChordataClass
MammaliaOrder
LagomorphaFamily
LeporidaeGenus
*Oryctolagus*species
O. cuniculus